



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

Indiana Alternate Diploma Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Indiana Alternate Diploma is a diploma available to a student with the most significant cognitive disability who participates in alternate assessments and satisfies graduation requirements. Eligible students in cohort 2023 may earn the Indiana Alternate Diploma beginning this spring. The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has provided answers to frequently asked questions regarding this new diploma.

Number	Question	Answer
1	What is a state-defined alternate diploma for a student with the most significant cognitive disability?	A state-defined alternate diploma is a diploma that: (1) is standards-based, and (2) aligned with the state's requirements for the regular high school diploma. Under the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a state has the option to offer a state-defined alternate diploma to an eligible student with the most significant cognitive disability and count the student as a graduate in the state's federal adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) if the student receives the state defined alternate diploma within the time period for which the state ensures the availability of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under section 612(a)(1) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). (ESEA section 8101(23)(A)(ii)(I)(bb), (25)(A)(ii)(I)(bb); 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(1)(ii),(c)(3),(d)(1)).
2	Who is eligible for a state-defined alternate diploma?	Only a student with the most significant cognitive disability is eligible for a state-defined alternate diploma if the student has taken the state's alternate assessment aligned with alternate academic achievement standards under Section 1111(b)(2)(D) of ESEA, and met any state-defined requirements. ESEA § 81019 (23)(A)(ii)(1)(bb), (25)(A)(ii)(I)(bb); 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(c)(3)). See question three for state requirements.
3	What are the state requirements to earn an alternate diploma?	<p>The alternate diploma is intended for students with most significant cognitive disabilities for whom a case conference committee (CCC) has determined that the alternate diploma is appropriate, as indicated in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and has taken the alternate assessment.</p> <p>To earn an Indiana Alternate Diploma, a student must complete the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minimum of 40 high school credits, applied units, or a combination of high school credits and applied units.• At least one of the following activities aligned with the student's transition goals:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Complete an industry-recognized certification, one year



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		<p>certificate, or state-approved alternative;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete a project-based or work-based learning experience as determined by the CCC; ○ Earn a work ethic certificate; or ○ Participate in part-time employment or other work related activities as determined by the CCC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beginning with cohort 2023 students, develop a transition portfolio that demonstrates the work experience, credentials, or work certificates the student completed during high school. <p><i>511 Indiana Administrative Code (IAC) 6-7.1-10 (Adopted Graduation Requirement) (LSA Document #22-325)</i></p>
4	How does the state define a “student with the most significant cognitive disability”?	<p>511 IAC 7-32-93.5 Sec. 93.5. "Student with the most significant cognitive disability" means a student:</p> <p>(1) who falls within one or more of the existing categories of disability identified in 511 IAC 7-41; and</p> <p>(2) whose cognitive impairments and adaptive behavior may prevent them from attaining grade-level and age-appropriate achievement standards, even with substantial adaptations and modifications of instruction.</p>
5	What are the characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disability?	<p>The characteristics of a student with the most significant cognitive disability as determined by the case conference committee include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A disability that significantly impacts intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior; ● Requires extensive, repeated, individualized direct instruction and substantial support that is not of a temporary nature; and ● Requires substantially adapted materials and individualized methods of accessing information in alternative ways to achieve measurable gains on the state academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.
6	When will the alternate diploma be available to students?	<p>The alternate diploma is available to students beginning with cohort 2023.</p>
7	Is there a cap on the percentage of students from a local educational agency (LEA) who	<p>No. A student with the most significant cognitive disability shall be granted an alternate diploma upon completing the requirements included in the course of study.</p> <p><i>Additional information related to reporting for the purposes of the school's</i></p>



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	may receive the Indiana Alternate Diploma?	<i>graduation rate will be forthcoming.</i>
8	May a student earn an alternate diploma and a regular high school diploma?	Yes. A student with the most significant cognitive disability may continue in pursuit of a regular high school diploma following receipt of an alternate diploma where the student is subsequently able to complete all requirements for a regular high school diploma as outlined in the specific diploma's course of study.
9	If a student graduates with an alternate diploma, does the student's special education eligibility end?	No. The alternate diploma does not end a student's eligibility to continue to receive special education and related services. The student would continue to be eligible to receive a free appropriate public education through the school year in which the student becomes 22 pursuant to 511 IAC 7-33-2(a).
10	For current high school students who have already been identified as a student with the most significant cognitive disability, have taken alternate assessments, and will complete alternate diploma graduation requirements, must the CCC convene to include the alternate diploma pathway for 2023?	<p>Yes. Where the student's course of study currently reflects a certificate of completion and they meet the requirements (course of study requirements and participation in the alternate assessment) for an alternate diploma, the CCC must revise the IEP prior to receipt of an alternate diploma. If the annual CCC meeting has already been held, the student's IEP may be revised without holding a CCC meeting in accordance with the requirements of 511 IAC 7-42-9(e) to have the student's IEP reflect the appropriate course of study.</p> <p>After the annual CCC meeting, changes to the IEP may be made</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) by the CCC at a CCC meeting; or • (2) without a CCC meeting if the parent and the public agency agree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (A) not to convene a CCC meeting; and ○ (B) to collaboratively develop a written document to amend or modify the student's current IEP. 511 IAC 7-42-9(e). <p>For students who are not yet seniors or part of the 2019-2020 cohort, the CCC may consider Graduation Pathways at the next annual CCC meeting.</p>
11	Will the certificate of completion continue to be available?	<p>An LEA may award a locally developed certificate, such as a certificate of completion, to a student who does not meet the graduation requirements for a regular diploma or an alternate diploma. A certificate of completion is not an Indiana recognized academic credential.</p> <p><i>Additional information related to reporting of certificate of completion for the purposes of the school's graduation rate will be forthcoming.</i></p>



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12	Are there changes to the Indiana IEP (IIEP) development process?	Yes. For the 2022-2023 school year, IIEP will add the Indiana Alternate Diploma Graduation Pathway option. In addition, the CCC will consider three participation criteria instead of four. After the 2022-2023 school year, a school that elects to offer a certificate of completion to students will have the option to select “other” and include the locally developed certificate in the student’s IEP.
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For additional information, please contact IDOE’s [Office of Special Education](#).

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